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ABSTRACT

With our traditional educational institutions facing major changes, some observers say the system as we know it is destined to collapse in the years ahead. There is still reason to believe that these dire predictions will not come true, however: there is reason to be optimistic about the future of the American education system if educators will face the challenges in a realistic way. This means setting priorities and determining what the school system can and cannot be expected to accomplish. This also means preparing for a shift in emphasis from serving a primarily teenage population to serving an increasingly older population. It means finding ways to involve a population in which only 25 percent of the people will have children in the schools in promoting the welfare of the schools. We need to find effective and efficient ways to train adults for changing occupational needs. Budget cutbacks will require greater attention to accountability as taxpayers demand the maximum benefit for the dollars they spend on education. (KC)

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Occasional Paper No. 68

CURRENT AND EMERGING STRUCTURES FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING:

Implications for Vocational Education R&D

by

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FOREWORD

Our traditional educational institutions are facing major changes. In fact, some say the system as we know it is destined to collapse in the years ahead.

Dr. William F. Pierce, executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers, argues against such dire predictions. Although our system will face several major challenges in the years to come, he feels optimistic about the future of the American education system *if* educators will face the challenges in a realistic way. This means setting priorities and determining what the school system can and cannot be expected to accomplish. This also means preparing for a shift in emphasis from serving a primarily teenage population, to serving an increasingly older population. Dr. Pierce feels we must find effective and efficient ways to train adults for changing occupational needs. Budget cutbacks will require greater attention to accountability as taxpayers demand the maximum benefit for the dollars they spend on education.

Dr. Pierce has an extensive and impressive background in education. He has been executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers since November of 1978. Prior to assuming this position, he held several positions in the U.S. Department of Education. In addition, Dr. Pierce has extensive experience as an administrator in the Michigan State Department of Education and as a teacher at both the high school and college levels. He has published widely in educational journals, and he has been the recipient of several awards and honors in the field. He has represented the United States in various conferences on vocational education and related topics in Switzerland, France, and the Soviet Union.

On behalf of the National Center for Research in Vocational Education and The Ohio State University, we are pleased to welcome Dr. William Pierce and to share with you his presentation entitled, "Current and Emerging Structures for Education and Training: Implications for Vocational Education R&D."

Robert E. Taylor
Executive Director
The National Center for Research
in Vocational Education

CURRENT AND EMERGING STRUCTURES FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING:

Implications for Vocational Education R&D

In 1979, secretary of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Joseph Califano, expressed concern over the effectiveness of vocational education programs. His subsequent recommendation that the federal contribution to vocational education be reduced by $150 million resulted in the greatest show of support for vocational education that the American public education system has ever witnessed. Members of Congress were especially aggressive in their continued support of vocational education. Community leaders, parents, general educators, and state officials all joined in the effort to counter the Califano proposal. Irrespective of what people think of the various issues he championed, Joseph Califano was a very effective secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. He suffered very few defeats while he was secretary. The effort to reduce federal vocational education funding can be counted among that small number of failures. Not only did the administration ultimately restore its recommendations to a level equal to the previous year, but Congress recently recommended an additional $100 million for vocational education. Today, less than a year later, I'm not at all sure the vocational education coalition could be as successful. A year or two from now, given more time for certain educational and social conditions we now face to develop and mature, the arguments that proved so successful last year might be pretty ineffectual; not because of any intrinsic difference in vocational education, but because of some very real differences that may develop in the future structure of the American education system, of which vocational education has always been such an integral and essential part.

In the next few years American public education may be challenged in more ways, by more emerging and evolving social, economic, and attitudinal forces than ever before in its history. Such basic assumptions as the public's view of educators' role in our society and education's view of the public's commitment will be challenged. Vocational education will be affected by those challenges in two ways. First, directly, as vocational education's goals, its purposes, the people it serves, and the way it provides those services are all held up for public scrutiny. These questions will arise specifically as a result of the nation's concern over youth unemployment. Those concerns will be reflected in new legislative initiatives as well as in questions regarding how those concerns relate to CETA, YEDPA, and Vocational Education Act reauthorizations. These issues are straightforward, open, and reasonably predictable. Vocational education has been responding to such inquiries, generally successfully, since about 1917. One thing remains constant under this set of questions. Everyone assumes the answers will be framed within the context of a well supported, viable public education system designed to serve the majority of the nation's children and youth. Although the need for tinkering with the margins will be admitted to, the core of the system of education in this country will be assumed to be stable. After all, "we own a piece of the rock." Although rocks may chip, they never disintegrate.

The second way vocational education will be challenged, and what I wish to devote the concerns of this paper to, is more indirect but will be responsive to those conditions in our society that are beginning to call into question our ability, our willingness, or our desire to retain the public education system of this country as it has been in the past and continues to be today. If the basic structure of the American education system is changed, as it well could be, then the question of the role vocational education plays, either inside or outside of that new structure, is a very different question than we have been asked to answer up to now.

Lest there be confusion, I wish to say at the outset that the chief state school officers are unequivocally and inalterably opposed to any movement that changes the structure of public education. Unfortunately, one of the dangers inherent in a democracy is that the majority, not a minority, decides. A case in point: the chiefs were also opposed to California's Proposition 13 before it passed—but it still passed! The people, not the educators, decided. And the people, not the educators, will decide the future structure of American education. One of the reasons predictions in this area are risky is that the people seem to be confused. They say they believe one thing but their behavior often creates the exact condition to which they say they are opposed. More about these apparent contradictions later.

What are the conditions that are beginning to call into question the continuation of public education as we know it?

The first of these is an erosion of confidence in public education resulting from such things as, first, a perception that many students don't learn very much. This perception is of course strengthened by (a) reports that one-fourth of all entering college freshmen need remedial math; (b) one-third need remedial English; (c) a ten-year history of declining test scores; (d) lawsuits by graduating high school seniors who are still functionally illiterate; (e) newspaper reports that a high percentage of teachers can't pass a basic competency test; and (f) scandalously high youth unemployment rates. Secondly, the call for a back-to-basics movement, in and of itself, suggests the public is convinced we don't do our job very well.

Henry Brickell, the director of Policy Studies in Education, reported a fascinating little study that seems to clearly illustrate the public's concern over how well we do what they feel we should do. He found a vast difference between what citizens feel is important for schools to teach and what is important for students to learn. "They made a clear split," Brickell reports. "Moral education, for example, hit the top of the student learning list and the bottom of the teaching list." According to the citizens in the Brickell study:

> There are certain things the schools should depend on the citizens to do. Heading that list are family living, morals, values, and ethics.
>
> There are other things the citizens depend on the schools to do. Heading that list are teaching basic skills, citizenship, and thinking.
>
> The schools can reasonably complain if the citizens fail to do the first. The citizens can reasonably complain if the schools fail to do the second. They are complaining.
>
> "I never understood that when I was a local administrator," says Brickell. "I had no priorities and was proud of it. The band, the youth center, foreign languages, sports, science, health, kindergarten—I loved them all equally. You are the most important, I told them all. Just as I had been taught in administration classes."

"Oh, I knew a fraction of the public didn't agree. We administrators knew there were conservatives out there in the community, hard-shelled, narrow minded people who thought the whole alphabet consisted of three r's. But we surrounded ourselves with the PTA and marched on."

"In later years I found that same minority in other communities. Every superintendent I met said: 'You wouldn't believe some of the diehards we have in this town.' But we have good schools in spite of them."

"Today I wonder whether that minority is not actually a majority—at least when it comes to minimum competencies for promotion or graduation."

To test this difference between expected learning and expected school teaching, Brickell asked about 1,500 people to spend $1,000 on any of fourteen goal areas such as basic skills, human relations, values and ethics, family living, fine arts, and moral education. He found that they spent $400 on basic skills, $115 on career or occupational education, and $25 on fine arts. Stated differently, they spent 40 percent on the basics, 10 percent on vocational education, and 6 percent or less on all of the other choices.

Now that's a reasonably scholarly treatment of the public's view of education. The executive director of the National School Public Relations Association says that newspaper articles do not develop attitudes, they merely solidify or confirm previously held beliefs. If that's the case, consider now a different, less scholarly but perhaps more prevalent, view of public education as reported by James J. Kilpatrick, an admittedly conservative observer of the American scene, who recently described education in the following way:

Our newspapers' editorial offices receive a steady stream of letters protesting conditions in the schools. Hundreds of such letters come my way every year. Let me try a kind of composite sketch of how a typical taxpayer sees a typical big city high school.

In this school, it is popularly supposed, none of the basic subjects are taught any longer. Students are not reading the great works of literature; they are not writing weekly themes, conjugating Latin verbs, or working out problems in algebra, physics, and trigonometry. They are not studying history, biology, or even basic carpentry or home economics.

How, then, are these hypothetical students passing the time of day? They are engaged, it is widely supposed, in sex education. Or driver education. Or nutrition education. Or health education. Or they are taking a day off while the teachers, if they're not on strike, are attending a union meeting. Mainly, it is thought, the students are goofing off. Most of the boys are stoned; half the girls are pregnant.

This urban high school, it is thought, is an island fortress in a parking lot sea. The students are attacking with switchblade knives; the teachers are fending them off with bicycle chains. Vandalism rules by night and day. The purpose is primarily to survive. No one ever gets expelled.

There one finds twenty-two basketball courts. Five football fields (one of them reserved for the majorettes and the marching band). And a swimming pool that covers six acres. A faculty enumeration finds twenty-seven coaches —but only one librarian.

The first couple of sentences from a recent *Fortune* magazine article will serve to illustrate the image of the schools as frequently conveyed by the media. "The Office of Education Scores Again" was the title.

> In line with the basic Washington axiom that every social problem is a political opportunity, Congress last year launched the Safe Schools Program. The social problem in this case is, of course, the fact that the schools aren't as safe as they used to be; the boys and girls have an increased tendency to mug their teachers, each other, and to burn down the place for kicks. Nobody has the faintest idea what to do about this deviant behavior; giving out 'Fs' for conduct does not seem to be the deterrent it once was, and the prevailing humanist ethos rules out schoolyard floggings.

If vocational education is indeed an integral part of the larger educational enterprise—and most of the vocational educators I know would contend that it is—then vocational education will, at least to some extent, be tarred with the same lack of confidence brush that is currently being applied to education in general. In the minds of a lot of people, vocational education is worthy of a certain lack of confidence because, in their opinion at least—

1. too many youth are unemployed;
2. programs and facilities are too frequently obsolete;
3. kids are trained for dead-end jobs;
4. too little attention is paid to employability skills;
5. there is no commitment to the disadvantaged and the handicapped.

Another condition that will undoubtedly have a significant impact upon public education is the current efforts directed at tax reform. Apparently, the American public has, to a large degree, exceeded its level of tolerance for increased state income taxes and local property taxes. Legislators across the country have heard that message loud and clear. Many of the more conservative legislators will try, I predict, over the next few months, to outdo each other in reducing spending and placing caps on authorized spending levels. More liberal lawmakers will find convenient closets in which to hide in order to preserve their political futures. Reduced local property taxes and reduced state spending can only result in reduced educational offerings at the local level. A lack of resources will probably lead to fewer vocational programs, fewer area centers being built, fewer new curricula being provided, less frequent replacement of obsolete equipment, and fewer inservice opportunities for teachers. All of these reductions can only lead, in my opinion, to further dissatisfaction with the public schools by the same people who refuse to provide the necessary resources.

If one looks at the historical source of funds for public schools, we see that an interesting trend has developed over the past sixty years. In 1920, for example, the federal government contributed 0.3 percent, the states, on the average, 16.5 percent, and local governments averaged 83.2 percent of all funds spent on education. In 1976, the federal contribution stood at 8.0 percent, the average state contribution had risen to 43.7 percent, and the average local contribution, for the first time in our history, had dropped below 50 percent to 48.4 percent.

With limits being put on local property tax generating authority and state caps being placed on state revenue-generating capacity, what can we expect to happen to that trend in the years to come? More funds from the federal level to take up the slack? I think not!

The movement to require a balanced federal budget will continue to be debated for some time to come. The alternative to a balanced federal budget is *not*—as it frequently has been in the past—

more federal spending in spite of the public's wishes. The fiscal reform message is heard just as loudly in Washington as it is in the fifty state capitals. Most legislators have this strange preoccupation with being returned to Washington by their constituents. Consequently, the alternative to a balanced federal budget (which I think would be disastrous for education—a view that I think most legislators share, at least privately) is *severely reduced federal spending.* In my opinion, only if Congress proves it can show restraint in spending, will the interest in a balanced federal budget begin to wane.

This view is borne out by the recent Senate action to reduce the first budget resolution by $3.6 billion, a clear reaction to the call for a balanced federal budget, in my opinion. Of course, they then made the art of crystal-ball-gazing a bit more difficult by adding several billion in defense spending and about $100 million to vocational education! That's a pleasant, hard-earned but unexpected, windfall. I don't think, however, that it can be viewed as a sign that vocational education, or education in general for that matter, will forever escape a new effort toward reduced federal spending and a balanced federal budget.

Another major condition that will have a profound effect on American education and on vocational education is that of declining enrollments. In 1970, the K–12 enrollments peaked at over 51 million students. These enrollments will decline through the mid-1980s to about 44.5 million—a 13 percent reduction. Secondary school enrollments peaked this year and will decline through 1990 by as much as 25 percent. That means that the problem is just now beginning to be felt in vocational education. And since the majority of students are eleventh- and twelfth-grade students, the real effect on vocational education probably won't be felt for a couple of years yet. If one assumes vocational education enrollments will decline at a proportionate rate, however, that's fully one-fourth of the current enrollment. How do we continue to justify classes of fifteen rather than twenty students? How do we keep 1,000 student capacity skills open when the enrollment drops to 750? What do we do with the tenured teachers who no longer have full classes? Declining enrollments may be more difficult to accommodate in vocational education than in other sectors of education. What will a major retrenchment mean?

One answer of course is to enroll higher proportions of secondary students in vocational education programs. Another might be to focus more attention on the junior high school student and exploratory rather than truly vocational courses. Another is to shift more and more emphasis to postsecondary and adult activities. Still another is to target efforts on disadvantaged, unemployed, or potentially unemployed youth and adults. In any event, such solutions suggest that the resources will be available if only vocational educators can identify the students. That may indeed be a falacious assumption!

The problem of attempting to cope with declining enrollments is exacerbated by the relationship between numbers of students and the dollars available to educate them. During the growth years of the fifties and sixties, there was a direct correlation between the increased numbers of students needing to be served and the increased numbers of dollars allocated for education. The public became used to equating more students with more dollars needed.

The unfortunate linkage of students and dollars will be difficult to deal with because, in the minds of many citizens, as the numbers of students decline in the late seventies and eighties, the expectation will follow the established equation—fewer students equal *fewer* dollars needed. As educators, you are very aware that your dollar needs are linked to such things as personnel salaries, physical plants, and instructional programs—not students.

Unfortunately, many of your constituents may not be as aware of that as you are. Consequently, the public is going to assume that if the educational dollars requested don't diminish, then educators are somehow ripping them off. They will then take things into their own hands and reduce their level

of support. Never mind that the current decline is projected to reverse itself from 1985 to 1995 and then decline again through about 2010. As a taxpayer, I'm worried about *this* year. I'm concerned over the fact that my local taxes have more than tripled in four years. I'm looking for relief *now,* not 1985. I think most taxpayers react the same way. Consequently, neither the students nor the money may be available.

Another social condition that will affect the schools is that we are an aging society. A decreasing number of births, a declining fertility rate, and increased longevity has produced a basic shift in our country's age-mix. The census data show that the number of births has fallen nearly every year for the last eighteen years, from 4.3 million to 3.1 million. A drop of almost 28 percent!

The longevity, or life expectancy, has risen from 47.3 years in 1900 to 73.1 years in 1976. Within twelve years, if present trends continue, it is predicted that one out of every five Americans will be at least fifty-five years old. By the 1990s, for the first time in our history the number of people fifty-five and over will be larger than the school-aged population.

This assumed change in the age-mix of our society will undoubtedly lead to a need for vastly different kinds of educational experiences being asked for by the public. While the age group traditionally being served by American educators grows smaller, different, more diverse age groups will be seeking different, more diverse educational services. Some suggest programs to help cope with the rigors of mid-life career change needs, rapidly advancing technology, swiftly shifting social values, a volatile and competitive job market, increased leisure time, and greater longevity, will be required.

The school system will be challenged to manage decline while simultaneously marshalling its resources, both human and material, to provide for the educational needs of a broader segment of our society, quite possibly with fewer dollars. Public schools will need to adjust to new demands while still providing services to the young.

What effect will the changed demographics have on vocational education? Vocational education has had a commitment to adults since 1917. However, the data show that the proportion of adults enrolled in vocational programs has declined steadily. The most cursory glance at the data shows that vocational education is essentially secondary-oriented. And yet, by 1990 75 percent of vocational education potential students will be adults. Will they be willing to accept existing secondary programs as meeting their needs? I doubt it! Will they require new programming and new curricula? Undoubtedly. Will they continue to support, financially, existing vocational programs? Probably not, especially if they don't, at the same time, feel their needs are being met. Someone has said, "If you don't own it, you won't fix it." It would appear to me, therefore, that the structure of vocational education must change in the future, if the majority of the citizens of this country are to feel ownership.

Speaking of not fixing it, if you don't own it, one additional demographic condition may well have as significant an impact upon the public financial support of education in general and vocational education in particular, as all other conditions combined. It is estimated that the percentage of adults having school-age children will have dropped from 52 percent in about 1960 to 26 percent by 1990. Only one-quarter of the people in this country will have any kind of personal stake in the education being offered their children. Only 25 percent of the American public will have a reason for caring about Paul Copperman's contention that "today's students are learning far less in school than their parents did." Copperman, author of *The Literacy Hoax* and president of the Institute of Reading Development in California, in recent testimony before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Education, Arts and the Humanities, declared, "Every generation of Americans has surpassed its parents in education, literacy, and economic attainment—except the present one. For the first time in American history, the educational skills of one generation will not even approach those of its parents. Only about one-quarter of this coming June's high school graduates will have the average level of academic skill recorded in the early 1960s.

"The average high school student today takes 25 percent less English, 35 percent less world history, 35 percent less government and civics, 30 percent less geography, and 20 percent less science and math than students a generation ago. . . . He is assigned less than half the homework and the textbooks he is given have been rewritten with a reading level two years lower than the grade he is in."

Can we expect 25 percent of the voting public to provide the financial support needed for vocational education? Obviously not. Can we get the other 75 percent of the voting public to commit themselves to a sufficiently large tax burden to provide appropriate educational experiences to the children of the remaining 25 percent? Unless there's something in it for them, probably not. Can we maintain vocational education as we know it? Perhaps. Then again, perhaps not.

As we attempt to evaluate the relationships between the social and financial conditions we will encounter, and with which we must deal over the next few years, one word keeps emerging, and that word is *contradiction*—contradictions that will make the environments in which each of us must function unsettled, unpredictable, confusing, and even, I suspect, on occasion, amusing. Perhaps the last word is the most crucial of all. I've a feeling that a good sense of humor is going to be absolutely essential if we educators are to muddle through the next few years.

One of the most interesting contradictions seems to be between the voter's intent and what actually happens once the vote is in. Postmortems and critiques of Proposition 13 have revealed some fascinating contradictions between what the people wanted to happen and what actually happened as a result of their vote.

The public clearly wanted property tax relief and reduced government spending in the Proposition 13 vote, and yet they did not want to reduce educational programs or change the traditional educational delivery system. For example, of those services tax-cutting citizens did *not* want cut, education was high on the list. Only 7 percent said they'd be willing to have schools cut, while 52 percent said they'd support welfare cuts. In another study, education ranked ninth on a list of services taxpayers wished to see cut, and yet, with lid bills and reduced taxes, it has been estimated that in ten years the amount of money available for education in real dollars will be exactly half of what it is today. Consequently, many services, by necessity, will have to be cut. The result is a very large gap between intent and actuality.

Recent votes show that the public clearly wants reduced government and a return to local control. For example, by 1978, 80 percent of the American public felt government wastes "a lot" of money. The Proposition 13 vote and most recent tax reform activities propose to eliminate government intervention. Yet, due to the property tax limitation in California, the state contribution to education rose from 40 to 75 percent. Everyone knows that the power and control goes where the money goes. In California, *the state* established a statewide salary policy, *the state* insisted on an elimination of all local reserves, and *the state* demanded that no substantial cuts could be made in child care or adult education. The intent of the vote was less government control. The actuality may have been the exact opposite.

Recently, twenty-eight state legislatures passed resolutions calling for a constitutional convention or a constitutional amendment designed to require a balanced federal budget. Yet, at the same time, states are actively lobbying against the administration's proposal to reduce the state revenue-sharing program by $2.1 billion—a reduction that could make a significant contribution toward the balanced budget for which those same state officials are calling.

Another way to look at the same issue is to observe that the public, according to the latest Gallup Poll, when asked how the funds they had just eliminated by property tax reduction were to be supplied, preferred that schools be financed through greater contributions by federal and state governments while, at the same time, they were voting for state spending limitations and calling for a balanced federal budget.

Another contradiction, closely related to the previous one, is that the enemy is simultaneously seen as the savior. In answer to a question of which level of government wastes the biggest part of its budget, 62 percent said the federal government—while only 12 percent and 5 percent singled out state and local governments respectively. However, the target of voter referenda is state and local governments. Consequently, the voters have and will continue to hamstring the revenue-generating capacities of the levels of government they trust the most and thereby increase their dependency on the level they trust the least and believe is the most wasteful. An interesting sidelight to this observation is the widely held belief by about 80 percent of American citizens that the federal government employs too many people. The facts are that, since 1946, the number of federal employees has grown from 2,434,000 to 2,716,761 while state government employees have gone from 804,000 in 1946 to 3,467,236 in 1977. At the local level, the numbers have increased from 2,762,000 to 9,090,727 over that same period.

Contradictions also exist between the quality of educational experiences citizens say they want for their children and their unwillingness (or if not unwillingness, at least inability) to maintain the quality as a result of their votes to reduce spending for social services. As indicated earlier, only 7 percent were willing to see schools cut. Those same voters went on to say that about 60 percent of them would not support a large tax reduction if it meant that a lot of public employees (including school teachers) would lose their jobs.

However, as a result of Proposition 13, in California at least, high-spending districts will not continue to receive the same proportion of support as they have enjoyed in the past; and these high-spending districts will be levered downward. The public will undoubtedly view such a reduction of resources as resulting in a loss in quality. The prediction is, therefore, that more people will enroll their children in relatively expensive private schools, thereby substituting one type of expenditure for another. The incentive for parents to enroll their children in private schools would be enhanced if they were provided either tuition tax credits for elementary and secondary students and/or vouchers that allow them to take the students, and the resources to support those students, and place them in schools of the parents' own choosing.

What of the low-spending districts that are levered upward? In the first place, many taxpayers claim that the result would be merely to raise teacher salaries, particularly in an era of increasing teacher unionism. At this point, an interesting set of contradictions may pertain that provide us with another example of the wide gap between the intent of the voter and what actually occurs.

There is pretty clear evidence that, contrary to popular belief, only one-eighth to one-fourth of new funds are applied to salary increases. Most of the money is used to hire more teachers, administrators, and aides, to buy more equipment, and to improve the quality of maintenance. Unfortunately, there is also some clear evidence that the effects on student outcome, resulting from the availability of additional funds, are uncertain and usually modest.

Education, which is a labor-intensive industry, could reduce costs by actively trying to convert to a capital-intensive industry. That need (especially in light of the previous prediction that in ten years there will be exactly one-half of the money available as there is today) can be addressed by an active support of the adoption of new technological advances to the instructional process. However,

the evidence of our unwillingness as a people to adopt technological advances to education is overwhelming. In general, the public has not demanded or supported changes in the basic structure of schools. Indeed, increased pupil-teacher ratios, year-round schools, computer-assisted instruction, and staggered graduation have all been actively resisted by the same people who insist they want to maintain the same level of quality while they simultaneously reduce the level of financial support. This contradiction may be explained by the fact that few people have a good understanding of the actual impact a particular reform or fiscal adjustment effort might have. For example, some people are aware of the fact that the president has committed himself to a reduction of $29 billion in the federal deficit for 1980. Most people do not realize that such a reduction will have less than a one percent impact on the economy of the United States. In real terms, federal budget cuts do not lead to significant improvements in those financial conditions that the American public finds so troublesome and burdensome. As a matter of fact, a recent study showed that over 90 percent of the American people either overestimate the amount of funds provided to education by the federal government or have no idea about how school funds are raised. Again, an example of the problem is the gap between intentions and actuality. How can voters judge the impact on schools of a particular tax reduction if they have no real understanding of the relationship between a specific tax and the programs being provided by their schools?

These then are some of the confusing, unexplainable, at times incomprehensible contradictions between what we say we believe as supporters of the nation's schools and our actions as aggressive supporters of school finance reform movements that promise to increase our net income. We are beginning as a nation to *not* put our money where our mouth is. At least not so far as public school support is concerned.

No discussion of the major issues shaping the educational enterprise today would be complete without reference to youth employment. Many of you are aware of the efforts, over the last several months, of the Vice-President's Task Force on Youth Employment and the American Vocational Association proposal that calls for a new $1 billion youth initiative attached to existing vocational education legislation. In addition, the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare will soon submit their proposals for consideration by the Vice-President's Task Force.

Since this is such an important issue, the Council of Chief State School Officers has also developed a position. Unlike the other proposals, CCSSO set out to develop a framework for analysis of the issue. The framework is rooted in the following four questions:

1. Who is the young person to be served?
2. What are the understandings, motivations, attitudes, and skills this person needs to be permanently employable?
3. What needs to be done with and for this young person so that he or she develops these attributes and is prepared for permanent work?
4. How will we and the young person know that we have succeeded?

In answer to these questions, among other things, the Council recommends that educators agree to provide employment and employability skills to youth ages fourteen to twenty-one who are poor, unemployed, out-of-school *or* in school but failing to develop employability attributes as determined by failure to perform at minimum levels to meet state graduation requirements, or suffer from excessive truancy. In addition, the proposal recommends for each person in the target population an Employability Development Plan (EDP), patterned after the IEP required in the handicapped legislation, be developed and concurred with by all appropriate educational, social, and human resource agencies.

The proposal suggests that educators are prepared to focus specific attention on the most hard-to-reach young people in sufficient intensity to insure that they acquire the necessary skills to obtain and keep a job. Vocational education would be asked to play a key role in such a program. For example, in the event the EDP requires specific occupational skills, vocational education would be asked to provide those skills.

The proposal would require vocational educators to focus their attention more precisely on disadvantaged young people—some of whom may currently be vocational students but most of whom are not, by definition. The proposal does not affect the number of nondisadvantaged currently receiving vocational education, but would strengthen vocational education's involvement and commitment to significantly more disadvantaged secondary and postsecondary students.

One final condition will, if successful, change—if not totally destroy—American education and American vocational education. That is, of course, the growing voter interest in educational vouchers and tuition tax credits. In an article entitled "The Case Against Vouchers and Tuition Tax Credits" Edd Doerr, the director of Educational Relations for Americans United for Separation of Church and State, lists nineteen arguments against those initiatives. Even though some of these arguments may not apply to vocational education, they still raise some relevant questions. How can you maintain vocational programming in any location if it is left to the whims of parents to place their child in a private school? How will you compete with the private-for-profit vocational schools that are bound to emerge if those proposals are successful? How will you maintain the racial and sex balance you've worked so hard to attain if you have no real control over the initial pool? How do you maintain a viable vocational education system if the vast majority of your students are poor, minorities, and handicapped—which is what most people feel would be the make-up of what remained of a public education system? These are but a few of the questions that vouchers and tuition tax credits would force you to answer.

These issues, especially if taken all together, suggest at the very least a different structure for education. At its worst, the structure as we now know it, according to the prognosticators, would be totally eliminated and a new private school system would emerge.

What are the most relevant vocational education research questions if all the conditions described to this point become reality? Essentially, you will need to know as follows:

1. What is the most appropriate way to provide vocational education to a diminished secondary student population?
2. Of the growing numbers of adults who will require specific programs to meet their unique needs, what proportion of them will want vocational education skills? Will those skills be attainable through current programs and facilities?
3. With continued reductions in local property tax and ceilings on state spending authority, how will vocational education be able to continue to maintain existing programs and facilities?
4. How will you convince three-quarters of the voters without school-age children that they should continue to maintain vocational programs for those students traditionally served?
5. How will you convince parents that they should not assign their child to a totally different school, thereby using the voucher to deprive the child of vocational education opportunities?
6. Can vocational education be flexible enough in curricular offerings (including an emphasis on employability as well as employment skills) and training locations

to really meet the individual needs of the nation's unemployed youth?

7. If the public votes for an essentially private school system, can vocational educators "sell" their programs, as in the private sector, to interested parents and youth?

I honestly believe that the future structures of education and training are going to be different. Unlike previous attacks on the system, those of the next few years will be less direct and more subtle and, therefore, more difficult to deal with. I propose that education in general and vocational education in particular begin now to anticipate and accommodate those changes.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question: It seems as though many alternatives to the public education system are beginning to emerge. At what point do you recommend to an organization like the National Center that we begin to, in a sense, "jump ship" and focus on alternative ways to deliver vocational education?

I agreed with what you said until you said "jump ship," and I don't like that analogy. I don't think it is "jumping ship" to recognize reality, to look at the demographics, to look at the conditions we are facing. We can legitimately say, "What do I have to do in order to preserve what I have now?" For me, that is a lot different than "jumping ship," and it seems to me we have to recognize the effect that those conditions are having on vocational education, and find ways to accommodate those changes in such a way that we can, indeed, preserve what is good about the secondary vocational education program. So I wouldn't call it "jumping ship." I would simply call it a need to look at what is coming, to recognize that most of the people we have to serve are not youth, that most of our clients (in terms of numbers) are not, in the future, going to be only children up to the age of eighteen.

Therefore, we have to shift our emphasis in order to provide an appropriate amount of education at the secondary level. If we don't, it seems to me everything works against the continuation of our present secondary vocational education system. We must recognize that these changes are coming, and we must try to accommodate them. It is time now to make a shift and to see to it that the adults feel a sense of ownership in the public education system of this country.

Question: Perhaps "jumping ship" is an inappropriate way to talk about it, but it does seem that the secondary education system, the way that we have delivered education in the past, may no longer be the appropriate vehicle for the future.

Yes, I think it is time to begin to change. I don't think, though, that the mainstream system is behind us and that we want to give up on it. I think we can accommodate those changes through the mainstream system, and I argue for that. But I think we have to accommodate those changing needs within the system, and now is the time to begin to address those concerns. How do we provide vocational education experiences for an increasingly adult population, for that 75 percent of the population that becomes the majority of the people we will be serving? How do we accommodate them through the area centers and through the community colleges? What kinds of programs do they really need? What can we provide for them that we are not now providing? These are only a few of the questions we should be addressing. But I don't think we have to throw out the system; we simply have to find ways to make the present system adaptable to their needs. I don't think it is too late to do that. But, then, I have always been an optimist.

Question: How are we being perceived by the employers, the people who use the products of vocational education? Do you feel that employers generally support our efforts in vocational education?

I sense a great deal of support from the public and from employers. They think vocational education is the best game in town, and when you look at the alternatives, you know that's a true

statement. But employers are not 100 percent pleased with some of the "products" of the system. I feel the response is mixed. There are still those who say, "I don't need trained applicants; just send me people who are literate, who can communicate, and who have the right attitude, and I will make them into the best custodians in the place."

As I said, I personally feel that the response is probably mixed. However, I am looking forward to the results of the evaluation study to see what employers *really* say and what they *really* think. That will be extremely helpful to us because, for the first time, we will have a sense of what employers across the nation actually believe. But, as I said, it's my experience that, on balance, employers particularly those who have gotten involved in vocational education programs—are very supportive of vocational education.

Question: Could you tell us what the chief state school officers' position is with respect to the Vocational Education Data System (VEDS)?

The chiefs' position—and that is the stated position—on VEDS has been not to collect the data. Not because we are opposed to a better, more appropriate, more reliable vocational education data system, but because we think Congress has simply gone too far, and that good information can be obtained without doubling the number of data cells currently in the total system. We are very supportive of an improved vocational educational data system. At this moment we are not supporting VEDS as it is being proposed by the National Center for Educational Statistics.

Question: It seems to me we cannot entirely drop the emphasis on the secondary level, especially with the current youth incentive activity in Washington. Rather than a *shift* of emphasis, it seems to me that what we need is an *increase* of emphasis in all areas of vocational education. Would you comment on this?

I think that may be a dangerous position for us to take, even though it is the position we have taken for a great many years. But those were years when the horn of plenty continued to pour out money and there was apparently no end. I think we have reached the point in this society where there may indeed be an end. When available resources become finite, we have to make hard choices. We have to stop saying, "Just give us more for everything and we will do the job as we ought to." We have never once, as educators, said to Congress, "There are some programs that are more important than others. When you come to the point where you have to make tough choices, these are the choices we recommend that you in Congress make." Now, if my predictions concerning attempts to balance the federal budget are true, then Congress is going to be forced to make those choices itself, and *they* will decide what is most important.

The thing that I found intriguing about the Henry Brickell study was that he asked, "What do you want the schools to do if you had *finite, limited* resources?" And that is different from asking, "What do you want the schools to do?" Brickell forced the people in that study to make decisions and choices. He forced them to choose priorities. I think it is time for us as educators to "bite the bullet." We need to stop trying to do it all and recognize that there are certain areas we consider more important than others, and that some of those other areas are just going to have to be handled by other agencies.

Question: Our senator pro-tem of the Ohio Senate recently said he anticipates many court cases regarding the equal protection clause. Do the chief state school officers have a position on this issue?

I cannot say what the chief state school officers feel as an organization, but I personally agree—I think we *will* be seeing more cases of this type. As a matter of fact, in a recent court case in Pennsylvania, the court ruled on behalf of a handicapped child and ordered that summer programs be provided for that child. NSBA entered the case by filing an amicus brief. Their argument was that the court's decision provided unequal protection under the law for everyone but handicapped children, and that it was never the intent of Congress or the Constitution to provide services for one group of children when you cannot, indeed, provide the same services for others. They argued that the handicapped law did not guarantee maximizing a student's educational opportunity. I think we are going to see more arguments like that. I don't know how the court reacted in that specific case, but I think the general response of the courts in cases like this will be a further interpretation of the law's intent. In essence, they're saying, "Look, we didn't say that you had to do this for all handicapped children. We simply said that if it is in the IEP and you signed off on it, you ought to adhere to your contract." So I suspect the courts will not respond very positively to counter-arguments. And I think parents and those who are looking favorably at voucher plans and tuition tax credits are saying essentially, "We know there is just so much money to spend, but we don't think it's right to spend more money on other children and less on *our* children." They say, "Because of the way you are funding programs, our child is not being provided equal protection." I think this is one of the reasons vouchers and tuition tax credits have such appeal for certain people. They see such plans as providing a greater share for their own children regardless of the overall effect.

Question: Would you comment on approximately what proportion of the available education funds should be devoted to legitimate trial or pilot-testing of program improvement ideas?

I have always been an advocate of "discretionary," or "innovative" money, or what I used to term "catalytic" money—those resources that could be used to try out new ideas. If the idea works, that's fine; if it doesn't, you have learned as much as if it did. So I think, clearly, that we have to have some portion of our budget tied up in educational research, but I don't know what that magic figure is. (Congress says 5 percent.) It will probably never be enough, because people are always suspicious of any money that they can't see going directly to children, and they generally don't trust researchers. Researchers will always have to fight that kind of lack of trust. But I believe educational research is essential, and I, personally, would like to see more money devoted to this area.

Question: What are likely to be the major results of the formation of the new U.S. Department of Education?

My sense is that there are two major results. In the first place, the new department provides the potential for education to be treated in appropriate ways in the political arena, and that potential does not now exist, did not exist before, and in my opinion, could not have been made to exist under any other configuration. In the second place, it provides for the possibility of more efficiency in government. Now, for me, those two potentials—and the recognition of the fact that in any administration, a cabinet-level position carries the maximum political clout—simply mean that we now have two potentials we could not have obtained in any other way. However, I would not look for magnificent and sweeping changes to occur within the next two or three years. We will just have to see if it lives up to its potential.

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